

U.S. Delays Its Approval Of Project in South Bronx

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 19 — In a move that could shape its future approach to the South Bronx, the Carter Administration has decided to withhold approval of a key low-income housing project there until it determines what supporting services are necessary to make the project succeed.

The project, a 732-unit cooperative proposed for the desolate Charlotte Street area, where President Carter stood in 1977, was endorsed two months ago by the New York City Board of Estimate — but only after a sometimes acrimonious debate over its advisability.

At that debate, and at previous sessions of the City Planning Commission, critics of the Charlotte Street cooperative charged that it was a mistake to build a gleaming new project in an area that experts said was the most devastated section of the borough. Instead, the critics said, housing should be built in other "stronger" areas of the South Bronx where there are stores, community facilities and other housing units.

Meanwhile, a fundamental difference of views emerged today between the Carter and Koch administrations over the status of the Mayor's larger proposal for the South Bronx, calling for the construction of 27,500 housing units over seven years.

The Commitment Mayor Wants

In an interview, Mr. Koch said that for some time he had been trying to get the White House to commit itself to the "concept" of building the 27,500 housing units in the Bronx. He said he viewed such a commitment as a prerequisite before the city went ahead with such plans as the Charlotte Street project.

But Jack H. Watson Jr., assistant to the President for intergovernmental relations, said that he did not consider the city's request for 27,500 units to be a formal call for a commitment from the Carter Administration. No such commitment could be considered, he said, until the city submits a more formal plan for the housing, and for other development of the area.

The remarks of Mr. Koch, Mr. Watson and their aides throw the plans for the South Bronx into some confusion, which was already heightened by the general White House-City Hall tension that had arisen lately over President Carter's budget cutbacks.

The Charlotte Street project appears to have brought the disagreements into the open. From its inception, in fact, the project's supporters and critics alike have described it as a symbol of the problems and stresses of the potential renewal of one of the nation's most blighted areas.

As a gesture to those who felt he was ignoring urban problems, Mr. Carter spontaneously visited the South Bronx in Octo-

ber of 1977 and declared that it would become a showcase of his urban policies. Within months, the administration of Mayor Abraham D. Beame produced a proposal virtually to rebuild the South Bronx. Details of the proposal were altered by Mayor Koch last April, but its scope remained vast. Experts have given Mr. Koch's proposal a price tag of up to \$1.5 billion.

On a less grandiose level, the Koch administration — spurred by Deputy Mayor Herman Badillo — has pushed for rapid approval of the Charlotte Street project, for which \$32 million had been found from a 1977 Federal allocation.

An internal dispute then arose last year within Mayor Koch's cabinet between Mr. Badillo, who said Charlotte Street was needed as a symbol of hope for the area, and Robert F. Wagner Jr., the city Planning Commission chairman, who opposed it unless a massive infusion of additional Federal funds could be used to build up the community around it.

Today Mr. Koch said he agreed the Charlotte Street project should not go forward unless there were ancillary "support services" to care for the impoverished tenants slated to live there.

Study Called Necessary

"Charlotte Street can only succeed if it receives additional major units of housing from the Federal Government so that it doesn't become a small clump in a desert," he said. "The fact is, if we don't have additional supportive services there, plus additional housing units, we would not build housing on Charlotte Street. We'd build housing in other areas that were basically strong like the Grand Concourse. We'd go with our strength."

Mr. Watson said it was necessary to have a review by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to determine what, precisely, would be needed to make the Charlotte Street project succeed. The necessary items might include retail stores, transportation services, social services and day care, as well as more housing nearby to make the area secure.

"We need to know what sort of appropriate facilities would insure that the project is viable," he said. "We want to know how much they would cost, and where would the resources come from to pay for them. These questions should be answered before the project goes forward."

By contrast, Mr. Koch said it was necessary to have a commitment for all 27,500 units of housing in the South Bronx before the Charlotte Street should be built. Mr. Watson suggested that a much smaller effort might be adequate for Charlotte Street, and that the question of the larger "commitment" of housing for the Bronx itself could not be answered now.